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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, TERRORISM, ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution, Terrorism, Elections, and Political Parties were the major editorial themes of the daily newspapers on September 28, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES  
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[1A.](#) "Why Was Article 44 Struck from the Draft Constitution?" (Az-Zaman, independent, anti-coalition published this page-four editorial by Ali Dhiya' Al-Din)  
"The first version of the draft constitution that was published in local newspapers on August 30th seemed to reflect a triumph for the principles of freedom and democracy; the first draft included several articles and paragraphs that reinforce democracy and freedom. Since then, Iraqi intellectuals have feared that such triumphs would disappear and unfortunately those fears have multiplied since the final draft was published-a draft that annuls Article 44 that committed Iraq to abide by international agreements.

"Why has this article been annulled? It has no deficiencies and it deals with human rights in accordance with international law. Why did the constitution's drafters cancel it if they wanted to draft a standard constitution? It is our understanding that international laws and agreements do not violate, tyrannize, or discriminate against nations, sects, and religions. International laws and agreements have granted independence to colonized countries, prevented all types of racial and gender discrimination, and protected people from torture and abuse. If we read the texts of international laws and agreements we would observe that they were written to promote humanity and protect dignity and honor. For all these reasons, we would like to know why the constitution's drafters wanted to marginalize those noble values and protections that all developed countries enjoy."

[1B.](#) "New Political Parties and Sudden Competition" (Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed, independent, published this page-eight editorial by Mu'ayyad Abdul Zahra)

"The Independent Electoral Commission in Iraq (IECI) has announced that there are 67 (of a total of 122) political parties registered to contend in the coming election, none of whom participated in the previous election. This number illustrates that there are many parties vying for power in the next government. This wide variety of political parties and alliances is working hard to prepare for the coming election and this represents the spirit of openness and democracy. This pluralism will enable Iraqi voters to elect their desired candidates.

"However, this variety of political parties and entities may raise several questions:  
What are the platforms of these political parties? Moreover, who is supporting and funding these new political entities and why has the number of parties increased as the deadline for the election approaches? Some people may say that those new political entities have the right to form, participate, or compete in the political process but is it right to have such a large number of political parties? This large number reminds us of the past election and its results. Some people think that some of these parties represent hidden organizations scheming to gain power. On the other hand, some people believe that establishing electoral alliances is the best way to ensure that the large political parties will

not engulf smaller parties--the upcoming election will witness new political alliances and political advertising. We all hope that the coming electoral process will absorb lessons learned from the former election for our own interests."

#### 1C. "The Wise Opinion"

(Al-Adala, daily, no bias, affiliated with SCIRI led by Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, published this page-three editorial by Dr. Ali-Khalif)

"Some who have specific agendas to implement in Iraq have become upset following the recent progress of the Iraqi political process. Those disgruntled groups went on to address the Iraqi people in such a provocative way that they forgot that Iraqis follow their wise religious authorities. Those groups became frenzied when they heard that the religious authorities issued a statement on the referendum and began looking for an explanation on what the statement meant; they later saw it was a fatwa which declared it was not a legal imperative to participate in the upcoming referendum.

"On the other hand, they point out that the religious authorities did not recommend voting 'Yes' in the referendum. Those groups started to report news about the religious authorities, thinking that such information would deceive the Iraqi people. This does not mean that the religious authorities control the rights of Iraqis and prevent them from expressing their free opinions; in fact, it means that the Iraqi people believe the religious authorities know better how to analyze the legislative and legal texts in the constitution. At the same time, it is up to citizens to choose what they think is best for them. Without a doubt, the religious authorities care about citizens' interests, particularly concerning the constitution.

"The religious authorities have said that the current constitution does not satisfy all ambitions but it is the best solution under the present circumstances. The current Iraqi constitution was drafted, harmoniously, to satisfy all Iraqi sects. For this reason, the religious authorities have recommended Iraqis vote 'Yes' to the constitution and ordered them to participate in the referendum. The religious authorities realize that rejecting the constitution will take Iraq backwards and allow terrorists to kill more Iraqis.

"The religious authorities are legally obliged to provide a decisive answer about this issue. Some people have become upset about such statements because they see that the Iraqi people respect and follow their religious authorities who have been the first voices that have called for holding elections and drafting a constitution that guarantees the rights of all Iraqis. Additionally, the religious authorities have encouraged people to participate in the election and today it encourages all Iraqis to take part in the referendum. The religious authorities have also been the first voices that have called for the rights of Iraqi people and they will play such a role until a free Iraqi country is established where all citizens live freely and fairly."

#### 1D. "Who Rejects the Cessation of Bloodshed in Iraq?"

(Al-Ittihad, affiliated with the PUK, published this page-three editorial by Abdul Hadi Mahdi)

"History has described Iraqis as peaceful people who reject violence and adore freedom and peace. Since the establishment of the Iraqi state, many political, social and economic changes have happened in this country. However, the Iraqi people were able to stay united despite the many attempts made to break apart an Iraq which is characterized by multiple ethnicities and religions. But, all those attempts have been unsuccessful. During previous decades, former Iraqi regimes adopted a policy that was aimed at destroying Iraqi national unity. More than ever, this destructive policy increased during the last decade when the Iraqi people were exposed to oppression and tyranny. Iraqi voices were clear at that time, rejecting violations against human rights.

"After April 9, 2003 [the fall of Baghdad], we noticed that the culture of violence has increased unexpectedly. This violence is a result of the former errant policies which have achieved nothing but massacres and bloodshed against innocent Iraqis. This recent series of violent episodes has become so intensive that it has started to affect all Iraqis. In addition, this violence has begun to target Iraqis based on their national or sectarian identity. Indeed, all Iraqis condemn these crimes. Recently, As-Sabah newspaper called for holding a 'covenant of honor' that forbids the shedding of Iraqi blood. I think such an initiative will engender widespread Iraqi support. Today, there are many attitudes by Iraqis against violence and I think these attitudes represent a consensus.

"But, it is very important that we must put those attitudes into practice. We must ask this question: Who can refuse such a covenant? I believe that those who do not belong to Iraq [i.e. non-Iraqis] and those who have accepted to become a tool used by foreigners to kill the Iraqi people, will reject this noble covenant. This initiative has come at an

important time and stage in Iraq's history. Iraq is moving forward toward the referendum and the upcoming election. For this reason, all Iraqis must implement this initiative and put it into practice in order to protect Iraqi blood from being shed every day."

#### **E. "Childhood and Terrorism"**

(Al-Fourat, independent, anti coalition, published this page-three editorial by Abdul Zahra Al-Talkani)

"Children comprise a tremendous humanitarian power capable of standing up to any superpower no matter how strong its weapons. They represent a peaceful power armed only with innocence. Childhood represents a very pure and spiritual world that is close to divine principles, that's why children are much safer and happier than others.

"If we can imagine excluding them from humanity, then our community would be transformed into a wild monster living in a real jungle. Therefore, children have prevented the proliferation of this monster's violence--most of the time, and sometimes children have even sacrificed their lives. It's like the case of Abdullah, the baby son of Imam Hussein, who was slaughtered by a criminal long ago.

"And now, thirty children were assassinated in Baghdad because one of the notorious mujahideen, who bore a recommendation signed by one of the two `prophets' (bin Laden or Al-Zargawi), was in a rush to reach paradise at the expense of thirty children's bodies. And that's in addition to the children who have died in Kadhumya, Al-Nahdha, Hillah, Najaf, Tal Afar and all other areas where terrorists have extended their reach.

"There are always children that stand against terror with their tender faces and soft bodies, and most of the time they have died with innocent smiles that mock their murderers. Children go to school in clean white uniforms wearing book-bags on their shoulders; daily they are challenging the death and terror that is pervasive everywhere in Iraq. They don't mind the danger, hiding behind school walls or dodging the car bombs in the streets, they only cower in silence, terrified when they hear bombs they react like doves responding to a loud sudden noise--they then resume laughing and playing, active and full of energy. They go home to narrate their experiences to their families and return to school the next day in a daily cycle of life that terrorists are trying to extinguish. Sooner or later terrorists will be defeated because they cannot defeat Iraqi children--so how can they defeat the men and women of Iraq who have become experts in dealing with death since the time of Adam and Eve?"

KHALILZAD